

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 011705

SIPDIS

SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/12/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY SANCTIONS NINE SENATORS FOR
SUPPORTING REELECTION

Classified By: PolCouns Jeffrey DeLaurentis, Reasons: 1.4 b

1. (U) On November 8, the Liberal Party suspended nine senators for ten months for breaking with the party's official position and voting in favor of legislation to permit Presidential reelection. Internal party rules require members of Congress to vote the party line. Prior to the move, the party had 29 senators of 102 total. The suspensions affected several leading senators, including Luis Guillermo Velez, a former party head, and Victor Barco, one of the "deans" of the Congressional ranks and a relative of former President Virgilio Barco. Velez has been outspoken in favor of presidential reelection and moving the party toward open support for President Uribe.

2. (C) Several leading Liberal officials, including immediate past party president Camilo Sanchez and Representatives William Ortega and Griselda Restrepo, told poloff that the length of the suspension was intended to prevent the nine senators from attempting to move the party toward open support for President Uribe's reelection at the next party assembly, scheduled for May 2005. Uribe is himself a former member of the Liberal Party. Poloff inquired if sanctions were planned for some 30 Liberal members of the House who voted for Presidential reelection in June. Both Sanchez and Ortega said that no such disciplinary move would occur, as House members have been generally more discreet in their pro-reelection stances than the nine senators. They added that Speaker Zulema Jattin, a Liberal, supports reelection, and her presence in the dissident Liberal group in the House make the likelihood of a similar sanction slim.

3. (C) While on the decline nationally, the Liberal Party nevertheless was the top overall vote getter in October 2003 departmental and local elections and continues to control the majority of governorships and departmental assemblies. Current party leadership and former presidents Ernesto Samper and Cesar Gaviria want the party to run its own candidate for President in 2006. Given those factors, the party disciplined several dissident, pro-Uribe members who openly broke internal party rules.

WOOD